



# LIFT

## Local Investment in Future Talent

### A rural skills and employability funding programme for Norfolk and North Suffolk

## APPLICANT HANDBOOK

Guidance for applicants to the LIFT Funding Programme  
via the Norfolk & north Suffolk Local Action Groups (LAGs)

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## Version Control

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<b>V 3</b>	<p><b>What is LIFT?</b></p> <p>LIFT trials: placements duration specified</p> <p>Web reference for LAG areas map (last paragraph)</p> <p><b>What will LIFT fund?</b></p> <p>LIFT Jobs: eligibility of activities LIFT will fund updated</p> <p>LIFT Trials: definition of end beneficiaries and eligibility of activities LIFT will fund updated</p> <p>LIFT Skills: eligibility of activities LIFT will fund updated</p> <p><b>LIFT Jobs-LIFT Skills – Definition of Basic Skills:</b> explanatory section and table added</p> <p><b>Eligible Expenditure:</b> clarification included about Indirect Costs / Overheads</p> <p><b>Procurement:</b> Table describing procurement process included</p> <p><b>Costs which can't be claimed:</b> clarification about IT hardware and software eligibility and grant size</p> <p><b>Match Funding:</b> clarification on using “your organisation’s own funds” included and on section on the finance spreadsheet to show the match funding</p> <p><b>Other ideas for sources of match funding:</b> Grantfinder link and information updated</p> <p><b>How to apply</b></p> <p><b>Stage 1 – the Expression of Interest:</b> New businesses and self-employed businesses must provide a cash flow forecast</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9-10</p> <p>10-11</p> <p>11-12</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>13-14</p> <p>14</p> <p>19</p>	12/12/2017

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# What is LIFT?

The Local Investment in Future Talent (LIFT) programme is a three strand delegated grant funding scheme for voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE) and other relevant organisations who can deliver a range of employability and skills support in the rural areas of Norfolk and North Suffolk. The three funding strands are:



**LIFT Jobs** – funding for employability support for unemployed and economically inactive people. Aimed primarily at enabling smaller organisations to be highly responsive to localised needs at market town or even village level, overcoming the particular employability barriers faced by rural residents including transport.



**LIFT Trials** –funding aimed primarily at enabling organisations to broker work placements normally between 3 months and a year in duration for unemployed and economically inactive people. In addition it can fund support and training for participants and businesses to ensure the placement is successful for both.



**LIFT Skills** –funding support for employed people who have skills needs, and for delivery of training support to micro, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in order to support and develop the skills of their employees. LIFT is keen to support employees with particular skills needs which would not otherwise be met. Successful applicants to LIFT Skills might be training organisations, partnerships of businesses, or even individual businesses.

LIFT Grant applications will be assessed and determined by rural Local Action Groups (LAGs). These are local, grassroots committees that already distribute EU capital funding to businesses in rural areas and are comprised of local private, public and voluntary sector representatives. LAG members work together to fund projects that will improve their local rural economy. They have a high level of local expertise and funding experience and provide the community leadership at the LIFT programme's heart.

The LIFT programme will fund eligible project activity delivered in one or more of the five geographical areas covered by LAGs. These areas are the Brecks, the Broads, Wensum and Coast, Waveney Valley and West Norfolk. Each LAG area represents a cohesive rural economic community. The LAG areas are shown on the map on the website: <https://www.liftprogramme.co.uk/local-action-groups/> .

LIFT is a Norfolk County Council programme funded by the European Structural & Investment Fund (ESIF) via the European Social Fund (ESF). All ESIF projects approved before the point at which the UK departs the EU have their funding guaranteed for their duration by the UK government, subject to two conditions: that the projects provide good value for money and are in line with domestic priorities. Any LIFT-funded projects are therefore guaranteed funding regardless of the timetable for leaving the EU.

There is no automatic right to a LIFT grant and not all applications will be successful. This handbook gives more detail about how applications will be assessed and what the criteria are.

If you wish to apply to us for funding, there is hands-on facilitator support available to help you through the application process. The first port of call for applicants is to check our website ([www.liftprogramme.co.uk](http://www.liftprogramme.co.uk)) to find the priorities for funding and see how your project may help us to reach our goals.

## What will LIFT fund?

We are keen to fund strong and innovative projects which are firmly embedded in their local communities and that can create new employment and enhance the local rural economy in the Norfolk and North Suffolk area.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have strong local links and knowledge in place and a personal or organisational track record which enables them to deliver.



**LIFT Jobs** will fund support to unemployed people and to those who are not actively seeking work but who may be ‘activated’ through initiatives that will realise their potential to work and address any barriers to work they may face.

In line with their local development priorities our Local Action Groups would like to see activity such as:

- Support to unemployed people to secure sustainable work, such as personalised 1:1 support, enhanced traineeships, volunteering, community support and pre-apprenticeship training

- New and additional transition training to facilitate access to employment in 'Growth Sectors' for individuals with highly transferrable skills.
- Pathways either to employment or progression within our growth sectors for those currently unemployed, inactive or without transferrable skills or experience
- Additional support for the long term unemployed, in particular those who have left the Work Programme and/or face complex barriers to work, for example homelessness, illness and disability, drug/alcohol dependence
- Careers advice for people who are unemployed, not currently considering employment, or distant from the labour market
- Projects to support self-employment, entrepreneurship, social enterprise and business creation as a route out of unemployment or to activate those currently 'inactive'.
- Projects addressing issues of rural isolation, transport, access and childcare

Funded activities will focus on providing:

- support to unemployed or inactive individuals living in LIFT-eligible areas (see eligibility map on <https://www.liftprogramme.co.uk/funding/eligibility-and-map/> )
- extra support for long-term unemployed
- intensive ongoing support to address complex barriers for people who have multiple barriers to employment
- additional support to inactive people to give them the skills or confidence to move towards employment (including self-employment)
- support for basic skills relevant to local labour market needs in order to help unemployed and inactive people compete effectively in the labour market. This could include literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- engagement and additional support to women who face barriers to entering the labour market, including language, skills, age and caring responsibilities
- solutions to overcome practical barriers to work
- workplace 'tasters' and opportunities to try out a workplace experience (full placements of 3 months or more will normally not be considered under LIFT Jobs and relevant applicants will be asked to look at the criteria for LIFT Trials).

These activities must:

- be personalised
- recognise that participants may have already undertaken a number of mainstream programmes
- offer practical help to support participants to overcome a range of issues preventing them accessing work
- be delivered in rural locations and/or make use of technology to support local delivery where appropriate and/or be offered at appropriate times to allow the target beneficiaries to participate, and in formal and informal settings
- be tested at assessment stage to ensure that activity is additional, appropriate and viable
- Align with existing provision

We will not approve activities that:

- duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes
- cut across national policy on grants and loans for tuition for skills activities without being able to evidence a local specific need
- do not address a market failure
- fall outside the scope of the ESIF Operational Programme



**LIFT Trials** - Rural businesses often struggle to recruit and retain appropriately skilled staff to grow their businesses. LIFT Trials will fund activity that allows SMEs to offer placements, trials, and/or apprenticeships to people who are currently unemployed or inactive and face barriers to securing employment.

Lift Trials will fund tailored and personalised support for rural businesses that will enable them to offer work experience to individuals who have no, or limited workplace experience. The support should be aimed at SMEs and micro businesses willing to offer an opportunity to someone they would not normally consider.

In line with the ambitions outlined in the Local Development Strategies (LDS) the Local Action Groups would like to see activity such as:

- support for SMEs across a range of sectors to provide additional apprenticeships, work experience, volunteering opportunities, graduate placements, internships or other activities which enable people to develop the skills they need to be successful.
- developing stronger links between business, educators and young people to ensure young people are equipped with the skills to start work.
- better engagement between young people and businesses to support them to learn about work and develop the skills they need to be successful.

Activities will:

- support businesses in LIFT-eligible areas (see eligibility map on <https://www.liftprogramme.co.uk/funding/eligibility-and-map/> )
- be tailored to both business and individual needs – successful projects will particularly need to evidence the support provided to the business, although clearly individuals unused to the workplace and facing barriers to work will themselves need support to participate successfully.
- be delivered in rural locations and/or make use of technology to support local delivery where appropriate. The business supported must be in a LIFT-eligible area.
- be tested at assessment stage by LAG members

We will not approve activities that:

- duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes
- cut across national policy on grants and loans for tuition for skills activities without being able to evidence a local specific need
- do not address a market failure
- fall outside the scope of the Operational Programme



**LIFT Skills** will provide grants which enable organisations, already embedded in their local communities and with a track record of success, to deliver:

- tailored and personalised support for employed people in rural areas to access training which meets their skills needs
- training support to micro, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in rural areas, to support business productivity and growth

We expect applicants to tailor grant activity to the needs of individual employees and local small businesses. In line with the ambitions outlined in the Local Delivery Strategies (LDS) and the local development need identified in the call, the LAGs would like to see activity such as:

- training to address skills shortages in particular sectors or local areas which are not currently being addressed
- leadership and management training in SMEs
- digital skills
- project management skills
- basic skills including literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- information provision about learning and skills
- brokering of opportunities between learners and employers

Activities will focus on providing:

- extra support to help employed people to gain basic skills
- additional support for employed people to progress at work through achieving higher skills
- additional investment to enable more people to gain technical and job specific qualifications, particularly at level 3 and above
- support for business growth through increasing workforce skills

Activities will:

- support employees who live and work in businesses in LIFT-eligible areas (see eligibility map on <https://www.liftprogramme.co.uk/funding/eligibility-and-map/> )
- be personalised to individuals and individual business needs

- be delivered in rural locations and/or make use of technology to support local delivery where appropriate and/or be offered at appropriate times to allow the target participants to participate in formal and non-formal settings
- be tested at assessment stage by LAG members to ensure that activity is additional, appropriate and viable
- align with existing provision
- provide participants with accredited or certificated qualifications which have been independently verified and approved.

We will not approve activities that:

- duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes
- cut across national policy on grants and loans for tuition for skills activities without being able to evidence a local specific need
- do not address a market failure
- fall outside the scope of the Operational Programme

## LIFT Jobs and LIFT Skills – Definition of Basic Skills

### Participant status on entry

When determining the basic skills position on entry the table below should help you select the correct option

Math	English	ESOL	Status	Comments
✓	✗	✗	Does not have basic skills	Does not have literacy skills
✗	✓	✗	Does not have basic skills	Does not have numeracy skills
✗	✗	✓	Does not have basic skills	Does not have numeracy skills
✓	✓	✓	Has basic skills	Has literacy and numeracy skills, whilst unlikely that participants have both entry level English and ESOL it is not impossible, they only require one of the two literacy skills.
✓	✓	✗	Has basic skills	Has literacy and numeracy skills. Although they do not have all of the possible basic skills the do have a literacy and numeracy skill.
✓	✗	✓	Has basic skills	Has literacy and numeracy skills. Although they do not have all of the possible basic skills they do have a literacy and numeracy skill.
✗	✓	✓	Does not have basic skills	Does not have numeracy skills

## Participant Progression Explained

A participant can enter with 0/1 basic skill/s but must gain a different basic skill on exit to be considered as gaining a basic skill progression. The table below shows how the participant records will be recorded based on the progression model (when a participant should be marked as gaining basic skills)

On Entry	On Exit	Indicator	Result
Has Basic Skill(s) [No]	Gained Basic Skill(s) [Yes]	R3	Participant did not have the full suite of basic skills on entry (entry level Maths, English or ESOL) and has gained one they did not have at the point of entry through the programme.
Has Basic Skills(s) [Yes]	Gained Basic Skill(s) [No]	n/a	Participant had a basic skill(s) on entry and has not subsequently gained any on the programme (it is also possible that the participant has all of the basic skills on entry and therefore could not gain any further basic skills)
Has Basic Skill(s) [No]	Gained Basic Skill(s) [No]	n/a	Participant didn't have any basic skills on starting and hasn't gained any since.

### How much funding is available?

The grant amount will depend on:

- the type of project;
- the size of the business; and
- the costs involved (NB: not all the costs of a project may qualify for funding).

### Eligible Expenditure

When applying for ESF/LIFT support the costs associated with delivering the activity fall into two categories: direct costs and indirect costs. Direct costs are those costs which are directly related to activity supported by an ESF project for example:

- salaries of staff directly engaged in LIFT activity;
- participant costs (such as allowances); childcare costs; and,
- other costs that are solely attached to the delivery of the LIFT project such as travel, marketing, events etc. If they are specifically for the project but cannot be solely attached, such as a joint event that is both for LIFT and another project, or the purchase of a computer for a member of staff working partly on LIFT, the costs can be apportioned, but the calculations must be shown.

Indirect costs are shared organisational costs, which cannot be connected directly to project activity, and which are difficult to attribute to the project. ESF have determined that a

Simplified Cost Option (SCO) must be used to calculate them. The SCO calculates indirect costs on a flat rate basis of 15% of direct salary costs and has been introduced to make evidencing these costs unnecessary in order to simplify the claim process. Costs that are covered as part of this 15% calculation and which therefore cannot also be included as separate cost items in the project include:

- Central/support staff and personnel costs - where the ESF element of their duties cannot be extracted from general duties and put on timesheets – e.g. reception, central finance, legal and HR costs;
- General equipment, IT and premises costs (NB equipment purchased specially for the project and mainly used for project activity can in some instances be included separately – either in full or apportioned – with a individual item cap of £1,000. Contact the Programme team to discuss);
- Telephone and postage costs;
- Electricity, gas and water;
- Insurance.

The above lists are not exhaustive because every organisation is different. It would be impossible to describe all the possibilities – the LIFT Facilitator can advise you.

## Procurement

Please be aware that procurement rules for the European Social Fund are very strict and you will be required to provide evidence that you have made appropriate efforts to ensure value for money. You will need to do this by collecting at least three quotes for any item purchased for your projects. You do not always have to purchase the cheapest, but if not, you will need to provide sufficient and appropriate reasons why not. If you make a purchase that is not wholly for you project, you will need to show your calculations on how the costs have been appropriately apportioned.

Value (ex VAT)	Process
Less than £1000	There is no need for a formal quotation exercise, but you should make sure you are getting value for money – for example, by searching for the product you require on the internet, or by phoning around a few suppliers. Keep notes / screen shots / emails as evidence.
£1,000 -£25,000	Three quotes or procurement exercise
Over £25,000	Tender process as per EU Procurement regulations

## Costs which can't be claimed

The following are not eligible **for any application under any priority**:

- costs that are incurred before the date of the grant funding agreement;
- financial charges, such as interest, fines and maintenance;
- reclaimable VAT;
- any items already subject to EU or national funding;
- projects the applicant is required to do to meet a legal or statutory requirement;
- costs connected with a leasing contract, such as lessor's margin, interest refinancing costs, overheads and insurance charges;
- salaries and running costs for commercial projects;
- long term salaries and running costs for community or not for profit projects;
- in-kind contributions which comprise the provision of land, real estate, equipment;
- renewal of licence fees, subscriptions and service charges;
- standard computers, standard business computer software e.g. for management of accounts, and mobile telephone equipment; funding of this equipment is complex and may be allowable under certain circumstances, please contact the LIFT Programme Facilitator to discuss.

The minimum grant that can be applied for is £5,000. Grants will not normally exceed £50,000 except where an exceptional case for funding has been made.

The maximum LIFT grant you can apply for is limited to 50% of the costs of delivering your project. You will need to have identified the remaining 50% of your project funding before your project starts.

## Match Funding

Eligible match funding may be from either public or private funds, and can include the following:

- Your organisation's own funds, including time spent working on the project by staff already funded by the organisation, where this can be evidenced through timesheets.
- Revenue funding from non-EU funding sources
- Income from trading (for social enterprises for example)
- Financial contributions from a business or other enterprise benefiting from your LIFT Skills or LIFT Trials project

Eligible *in kind* match funding can include:

- Project volunteer time 'costed' at an appropriate, agreed pay scale.

- Council Officer in-kind time from South Norfolk District Council if your project is in South Norfolk and fits with their priorities (these can also be included on your claim to increase your indirect cost calculation). The LIFT Facilitator can broker discussions with South Norfolk District Council about working in partnership.

If your project is based in **Broadland** you can be considered for match funding from the District Council through the LIFT application process.

If your project is based in **South Norfolk** you can be considered for match funding from the District Council, or to be supported with in-kind council officer time. Again this is done via the LIFT application process.

The match funding table at the bottom of the finance spreadsheet (Annex 1. Finances and Outputs) is to assist in identifying the project’s match funding. The headings can be amended wherever necessary. If you are using current staff, voluntary staff or SNDC In-kind match in the project, their salary costs should be entered both in the appropriate expenditure sections, and entered again in the match table.

Match Funding										
SNDC Inkind										0.00
SNDC cash match (grant)										0.00
Other grants / donations										0.00
Volunteer time										0.00
Revenue from selling product										0.00
Company funds (own staff)										0.00
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Other district councils have their own relevant grant schemes. Please contact us at [lift@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:lift@norfolk.gov.uk) for the latest news on these and other opportunities.

If your project ideas falls under the LIFT Skills strand it’s worth checking to see if the New Anglia LEP Skills Deal funding could be a match funding option. More details can be found at [www.newanglia.co.uk/skills-deal-programme](http://www.newanglia.co.uk/skills-deal-programme)

### Other ideas for sources of match funding

You may want to explore funding that is already aimed at your type of organisation or project activity from the Lottery, the UK government, local councils or charitable trusts and foundations.

Grants 4 Norfolk provides Grantfinder searches of funding opportunities for Norfolk businesses thanks to support from Norfolk County Council – see [http://idoxopen4business.co.uk/norfolk\\_bus](http://idoxopen4business.co.uk/norfolk_bus) . Also, register with [www.beehivegiving.org](http://www.beehivegiving.org) which will search through thousands of funders to find ones relevant to your organisation.

There may be specialised grant opportunities based on your location, or the field you are in (the arts; health, mental health, community cohesion, education, environment, business etc) or based on the people you work with (men, women, ex –offenders, young people, older people, people with disabilities, substance misuse, single parents, refugees etc)

An alternative approach is if you can add a skills and/or employability element to a wider project (for example a community building refurbishment, a care farm, a new social enterprise, resettlement support, or community event) we can explore with you ways to match LIFT funds without 'double funding'.

There is information on match funding opportunities on the LIFT Programme website: <https://www.liftprogramme.co.uk/funding/match-funding-other-funding/> .

## **Receipt of grant payments**

Grant payments are paid in arrears and therefore applicants need to demonstrate that they have sufficient funds to pay for the project costs until grant payments are received.

Grant payments can only be claimed:

- on a quarterly basis (we can discuss a more frequent claims schedule for organisations which can demonstrate they need this; and
- after the work being claimed for is complete and paid for.

## **Who can apply?**

To apply for LIFT funding the applicant, or their project or beneficiaries - must be in a LAG area. Please check [www.liftprogramme.co.uk](http://www.liftprogramme.co.uk)

Applications can be made by small Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE's) and other small to medium sized organisations based in the rural areas of Norfolk and North Suffolk already embedded in their local communities. They could be:

- private businesses;
- public organisations;
- voluntary organisations;
- groups of businesses
- charities
- community groups

Applications from larger organisations with links to the local communities in the LIFT area will also be considered.

Applicants must be a 'legal entity' and able to sign a legally binding contract.

You can apply for more than one grant from the LIFT Programme, if you wish to do so, please discuss this with the LIFT Facilitator.

## How to determine business size?

The size of the business depends on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees it has and its financial performance.

### What is an FTE employee?

Anyone who works a minimum of 30 hours per week counts as 1 FTE employee. A person working 30 hours a week for 3 months of the year would be 0.25 FTE employee, as is a person who works 1.25 days a week all year. FTEs include business partners and directors. If a business partner, director or other employee works more than 30 hours per week they still count as 1 FTE employee.

Applicants should use the table to check which category they are in.

Number of FTE employees	Turnover or balance sheet Total	Business category
Fewer than 250	€50 million (about £39 million) or less	Medium
Fewer than 50	€10m (about £7.9 million) or less	Small
Fewer than 10	€2m (about £1.6 million) or less	Micro

## Linked Businesses

The business will be treated as one legal entity if it is linked with one or more other businesses. The applicant therefore needs to take into consideration the FTE employees and financial information of any other businesses to which they are formally connected.

Two or more businesses are considered to be linked when they have any of the following relationships:

- one business holds a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another;
- one business is entitled to appoint or remove a majority of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another;
- a contract between the business, or a provision in the memorandum or articles of association of one of the businesses, enables one to exercise a dominant influence over the other; and

- one business is able, by agreement, to exercise sole control over a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in another.

Businesses may also be considered as linked if they are controlled by the same directors and operate in adjacent markets.

Further guidance on what is deemed as a formal connection is provided within the guidance 'The new SME definition – user guide and model declaration' at <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/15582>

## **If an applicant has had public funding**

If our funding could give you or other organisations an advantage over other organisations offering similar services then our funding may be considered to be 'State Aid', so applicants will be asked to declare whether they or any businesses they are formally linked with have received funding from the EU or other public sources when they apply. Applicants will need to explain in detail what this funding was used for and whether or not it has been awarded under **de minimis** state aid. If it has, reductions may have to be made to the amount of grant that can be offered to ensure that it does not exceed the state aid permitted. Further information about state aid is available from [www.gov.uk/state-aid](http://www.gov.uk/state-aid). De minimis rules mean that a single business or undertaking can only receive up to 200,000 Euros of de minimis aid over a three year fiscal period. If you have received any funding under 'de minimis' rules it will say so clearly in your grant offer from your funder.

## **How to apply**

The LIFT Programme is a two stage scheme and applicants will need to fill out:

1. an Expression of Interest; then, if approved,
2. the Full Application.

If an applicant wishes to apply for multiple strands, a separate application must be completed for each of them. Please discuss this with the LIFT Facilitator.

We expect most projects to take 3-4 months to determine, from Expression of Interest through the Full Application and Local Action Group meeting. However, it could be longer depending on the Local Action Group meeting schedule, and if any queries raised during appraisal take time to resolve.

## Stage 1 – the Expression of Interest

Applicants can download the LIFT Applicant Handbook from the website at [www.liftprogramme.co.uk](http://www.liftprogramme.co.uk) but will need to contact the LIFT Project Team for a brief discussion on their idea before a copy of the Expression of Interest (EOI) form will be sent.

On the (EOI), applicants will need to give the following details about their proposed project:

- their business or organisation details;
- the location;
- what the objectives are;
- how it will be delivered;
- who will benefit from it (for example, how it will help the business to grow and create jobs)
- how much it will cost;
- why a grant is needed to fund it; and
- how much funding is needed, for how long and what the money will be spent on.

The EOI is submitted electronically, as a PDF form with the two Excel annexes. After it has been submitted, applicants will receive an email acknowledgement within 3 working days.

The EOI will be checked to make sure it includes all the relevant information. If anything is missing, it will be returned to the applicant to update. The EOI will be assessed for eligibility by the LIFT Team, reviewed by Local Action Group members and if applicable by South Norfolk or Broadland District Councils. For further details on how to complete the EOI please read the EOI How to Complete Guidance or contact a member of the team.

### **Evidence to send with an Expression of Interest**

Applicants need to send the following with their Expression of Interest form:

- financial accounts for the applicant's business;
- supporting case studies, market research or feasibility studies (if applicable)

### Financial accounts

Applicants must send copies of accounts for the business or organisation applying for the grant. These must include all of the following:

- title and introduction pages;
- profit and loss statements;
- balance sheets; and
- any account notes pages.

Copies of financial accounts are needed for the last 3 years.

New businesses that don't have accounts covering the 2 or 3 years required must send one of the following:

- draft accounts;
- latest tax returns;
- management accounts; or
- an opening statement from an accountant or business adviser that includes expected income and operating expenses;

They should also provide cashflow forecasts covering at least the duration of the project and incorporating projected project costs alongside operating costs.

Self-employed businesses that don't have accounts covering the 2 or 3 years required must send one of the following:

- draft accounts;
- latest tax returns; management accounts;
- cash flow forecasts showing how the business will operate during the life of the project.

### **How Expression of Interests are assessed**

Please be aware that not all EOI's will be asked to proceed to the full application stage.

The EOI assessment will cover a range of factors including:

- if the business and the proposed project activities are eligible under the scheme; and
- how the project fits the LAG's Local Development Strategy priorities.

Once they have assessed the application, the LIFT Programme team will either:

- invite the applicant to submit a Full Application.or
- explain why the project can't be supported:
  - Not being eligible
  - EOI needs more work. If this is the case, the LIFT Programme Facilitator will suggest areas for improvement and explain where applicants can get more help and support before the application can be resubmitted. Once the EOI has been formally submitted, it will take a maximum of 4 weeks for a decision whether it can proceed to the full application stage.

When an applicant is invited to submit a Full Application, the applicant will receive an official email from the LIFT Programme team including the forms to be completed and the reference code to be used in all LIFT communications and documents. A maximum of 10 days from the Full Application invite, the applicant will receive notification of any queries or concerns identified during the appraisal, which should be addressed in your Full Application (Annex 2 of question 2.4). These comments or queries are designed to support applicants to make the best possible case for funding at Full Application. The LIFT Programme Facilitator will contact applicants to provide support during the Full Application development and to clarify any questions raised in the comments.

LIFT Programme applications are also reviewed by the Local Action Groups. Local Action Groups members see the Expression of Interest and if any members raise queries or make

comments, the LIFT Programme team will share these with the applicant in 15 days. The response to these comments also needs to be part of the Full Application (Annex 3 of question 2.4). In cases when South Norfolk District Council's and/or Broadland District Council's match funding has been requested at the EOI stage, the applicant may also receive comments from the match funder(s) to address as part of the Full application (Annex 4 of question 2.4).

The guidance to complete the Full Application will need to be downloaded from the LIFT website: [www.liftprogramme.co.uk](http://www.liftprogramme.co.uk) .

## Stage 2 – the Full Application

Being invited to submit a Full Application is no guarantee of grant funding.

If the EOI is successful, applicants will be contacted by the LIFT Programme team through an official email including the Full Application form and annexes. The email will detail the next steps for the applicant including the submission deadlines and the project code to be used in all LIFT communications and documentation.

The Full Application form asks for more detail about the project - building on the information given in the EOI. It will also ask if there have been any changes to the project since the EOI, what they are and how they will enhance the project.

ESF provide more detailed information for all applicants to ESF programmes which may be worth downloading to assist with the planning of your project, determining eligibility of your participants and evidencing your participants and expenditure, and guidance on output and result definitions. If you need any assistance with these, please contact one of the LIFT Programme Team to discuss.

- ESF National Eligibility Rules (Participant and Expenditure Eligibility)
- ESF Data Evidence requirements can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-eligibility-documents>
- Output and Result Indicator Definitions <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-outputs-and-results>

These documents and other relevant information on the ESF programme can be found on the LIFT Website under [documents download](#).

The LIFT Facilitator will be available to assist with the development of the full application and will advise on the requirements of the programme. Applicants are required to consult

the LIFT Programme Facilitator with at least one meeting (or detailed phone conversation) during project development.

After the form has been submitted, the applicant will receive an acknowledgement by email within 3 working days. The LIFT Programme Team will check the form to make sure that it includes all the relevant information.

If anything is missing, it will be returned to the applicant to update. There will be set deadlines that will need to be met in order for the application to be put in front of the LAG Committee. If the updated form isn't received by the next deadline, the application could be delayed.

### **Evidence to send with a Full Application**

Applicants need to send the following with their Full Application form:

- Confirmation of match funding from each funder
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Sustainability Policy
- De Minimis Statement
- Non VAT registered confirmation letter
- Job Descriptions
- Organogram
- Service Level Agreements with Delivery Partners
- Project level risk register

### **How Full Applications are assessed**

The LIFT Programme team may need to contact the applicant to discuss the application or to ask for more information and may spend more time assessing larger or more complex projects. In all cases the applicant will be given an estimated timescale for a decision.

Full Applications will be assessed and scored against a range of selection criteria including those set out below.

#### Strategic fit: how the project fits with the priorities for LIFT funding

The assessment will determine how well and to what extent the project will:

- meet the eligibility criteria;
- deliver against one or more of the LIFT Programme's priorities set out at the start of this handbook; and
- benefit the rural economy.

#### Need for the project: the problem the project is seeking to address

The LAG will assess the extent to which the project may displace economic activity undertaken by other businesses. It will also check facts, assertions and evidence relating to this that the applicant provides in support of the application.

The application will need to show:

- there is a need for the project and this has been clearly identified;

- the project outcomes which best address the needs of those the project is seeking to be of benefit to; and
- the impact the project has on other businesses.

Financial performance: the viability of the underlying business and the proposed project

The application will need to show:

- how the delivery of the project may impact the existing business operations (if the application is from an existing business), including the ability to fund the total costs of the project until the grant is reclaimed; and
- how the business will benefit from the project.

Where an applicant is operating with very tight financial margins and ability to cashflow the project is potentially a concern, the Finance and Appraisal Officer may advise the applicant to submit a cashflow projection showing how project finances will be managed through the life of the project.

Value for money and the need for public funding: to what extent does the project proposal offer good value for money?

The application will need to show:

- the amount of grant required to deliver the outcomes and outputs;
- that other options have been considered;
- what difference grant aid will make when compared to what would happen without grant aid; and
- that supporting the project won't harm other similar businesses.

Project Sustainability and Impacts: Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability and impact of the project

The application will need to show:

- how the project will continue to benefit people after funding comes to an end. Projects should be sustainable, and not dependent on future public funding; and
- how the project will affect the environment and/or community groups within the area
- that the project does not disadvantage anybody in terms of ethnicity, disability, age and gender.

Delivery approach and how the project can be successfully delivered on cost and on time

The application will need to show:

- that the proposed project manager has the skills and resources to deliver the project successfully
- that the delivery approach is well thought through and based on evidence and
- that the project can show how successful it has been with good evidencing and data collection approaches in place.

Risk: have risks to delivering the project been identified

The application will need to show:

- that the risks that have been identified are relevant to the size, scale and scope of the project and to the business / organisation in carrying out the project; and
- how these risks will be mitigated.

## **The final decision**

Each LAG decision-making panel meets roughly every 3 months. They will decide if a Full Application is successful and if a grant offer can be made. Applications which cover more than one Local Action Group area will be determined by the LIFT Programme Board, which incorporates members from each of the Local Action Groups.

For an application to be considered at a LAG meeting, a deadline for completed Expression of Interest and respective Full Applications must be met. Dates when the Local Action Groups meet are available on the LIFT website [www.liftprogramme.co.uk](http://www.liftprogramme.co.uk).

The LIFT Programme team will let applicants know whether or not they have been successful.

### **Unsuccessful applications**

Applicants will receive an email from the LIFT Programme team explaining the reasons why their application was unsuccessful.

Applicants can ask the LAG to review their decision if they think that:

- the decision was based on an error of fact;
- the decision was wrong in law; or
- the LAG made a procedural error.

Applicants must make this request within 60 days of receiving the email.

Applicants should email the LIFT Programme team at the address listed on the front page. You can find the appeals procedure on the <https://www.liftprogramme.co.uk/about-lift/document-downloads/>.

If a Full Application is rejected, the applicant will be allowed to apply again, but they will have to resubmit a new Expression of Interest.

### **Successful applications**

If the Full Application is successful and a project is approved for funding, the LIFT Programme team will send the applicant a grant funding agreement. It will explain when work can start on the project and the terms and conditions.

If the applicant can meet all the timings and the terms and conditions of the grant funding agreement, they must return a signed copy of the grant funding agreement within 30 working days of the date of issue. If they don't, the funding offer will expire.

The LIFT Programme team will arrange an inception meeting with each successful project at their offices to talk through the grant funding agreement in detail, in particular about how to claim the grant, the evidence required by ESF and how long the documentation must be kept after the project ends.

### **Start date**

There will be no payments for any work carried out before the start date.

Applicants must not start work, make any deposits, order or buy anything for a project until they have received a grant funding agreement with an official start date. If they don't wait for the official start date, the grant offer may be withdrawn.

### **Meeting the terms of the grant funding agreement**

Applicants must meet the terms set out in their grant funding agreement. If they don't, the LAG may:

- withdraw the grant;
- apply a penalty by deducting payment from a grant; or
- work with the DWP to recover some - or all - of any grant monies already paid.

### **How to claim a grant**

After the inception meeting, the LIFT Programme team will send a claim form to the successful applicant, including instructions about what to do next.

Applicants must fill in the claim forms and return it with:

- invoices that match the costs and suppliers stated in the grant funding agreement;
- quotes collated for any purchase
- bank statements or other evidence to confirm that these invoices have been paid in full;
- diary entries for meetings where travel is required
- photographs of the project, activity or equipment; and
- a progress report explaining what they have done so far and any delays.

The payment schedule will be on a quarterly basis unless other arrangements have been made, and the final payment of grant will be at least 15% of the total grant award and this will only be paid once the project is completed and a report and tracking of outputs and results have been received.

If a check finds that the value of the costs included in an applicant's claim exceeds the amount that is actually eligible for inclusion in the claim by more than 10%, then unless the applicant can demonstrate that they are not at fault, a 2 stage reduction is applied to calculate the amount that is paid for that claim.

## **Site visits and inspections**

A variety of bodies are entitled to inspect projects and project documentation at any time with a minimum of advance notice. Notice will normally be at least 48 hours in advance although in some circumstances it may be less. As well as LIFT Programme staff, these bodies include DWP, the National Audit Office, European Commission and European Court of Auditors.

In an inspection, they'll check that projects are meeting or have met all terms, conditions and timings from the grant funding agreement.

Applicants must co-operate fully at any inspection. This is a condition of the funding agreement.

## **Publicising the grant**

The European Union requires that grants are publicised. The requirements will be set out in the grant agreement letter.

Successful applicants will be required to:

- display the ESF logo on all print and publications, including any documentation informing beneficiaries/participants,
- mention the grant in any press releases, online communications and websites; and
- display a poster including the ESF and LIFT logos.

Non-compliance with publicity requirements is a breach of the funding agreement and may result in the grant claim being reduced, withdrawn or reclaimed. Applicants must cover the cost of publicising the grant from their own funds. This cannot be included in claims for grant reimbursement. Appropriate logos will be provided by the LIFT Team, and electronic and hard copies of all materials should be kept as evidence of compliance.

## **Changes during the grant period**

The applicant is expected to use the grant money to pay for items as specified in the application and grant funding agreement. During the grant period, exceptional circumstances may arise where applicants need to change elements of a project. They must inform the LIFT Programme team by email immediately and where appropriate seek a contract variation, which should be agreed before any changes are made.

Applicants must inform the LIFT Programme team about any changes to a project, for example:

- closing, selling or transferring the business that's associated with the grant, as in some circumstances, the archived documentation for the project will need to be transferred to NCC for appropriate archiving of claim evidence.

This applies during the project and for three years after the payment of the final claim. Agreement to an amendment is not automatic and if the applicant goes ahead with a change that the LAG does not agree to, there may be an obligation to repay the grant or the LAG may withhold part or the entire remaining grant.